

Fangirls: More Than Just Screaming Teenagers

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Artists and storytellers continuously produce new media because of the fans that support them. Fangirls are a particularly powerful subset of fans. Through a video essay, I explore the definition of a fangirl, the evolution of fangirls and why they should be treated with respect. I specifically explore fangirls of Franz Liszt, The Beatles, and One Direction. I find that all of these fangirls throughout the years have been seen as hysterical and silly; their interests are not taken seriously. I argue that fandom plays a positive role in young girls' lives, and it should be encouraged. Further, I argue that everyone should find the fangirl within themselves.

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Process Analysis Statement

In coming up with my thesis, I knew I wanted to explore a topic that was special to me. Throughout my high school years, I always identified as a fangirl. It was a way to embrace my dorkiness and share it with others. It was a way to feel like I was a part of something larger. By the time I reached junior year of college, being a fangirl was not really my priority, but it still felt like part of my identity. It also appeared to be a topic that had not been explored much.

In addition, I knew I wanted to do something video related. I am a Telecommunications major, and I wanted to have more hard skills to use in the future. Therefore, I decided to do a video essay. It was the perfect mix of learning new skills and implementing old ones. It also gave me the freedom to tell this story from my own voice, which I felt was important. While the topic was very personal, I knew I would need outside research in order to complete my argument. Therefore, I embarked on a journey of investigating the topic from a more research-oriented and analytical point of view.

My research began by scouring the web for any studies or scholarly opinions on fangirls. I started with the library databases. There I found information about fans in general but nothing specifically about fangirls. I then went on to explore news articles, online dictionaries, *YouTube*, blogs, and forums; this is where I found the bulk of my information. I was not surprised to find that most of my materials came from these sources because fangirls congregate in these spaces. After I had a solid basis of research, I began to write my script. I decided to explore the topic in chronological order because I wanted to see how fangirls and their perception had changed over the years. The decision to focus on The Beatles and One Direction came about because I realized they were some of the most visible fangirls. This also weeded out some of my own personal bias

because I am not and have never been a fangirl for either of those bands. While writing the script, I also wrote down ideas on how I would complement my words with visual elements. This process took longer than expected because I had to incorporate my own voice, the opinions/research from others and figure out how to show all of that in a visual way.

After writing the script, I compiled all of the visual elements that I was not creating myself. This involved finding YouTube videos and pictures and editing them down. Similar to the script, this took longer than expected because of the volume of media that I needed. In the end, I used about 80 videos and pictures in my thesis. After I finished that, I recorded a rough version of my narration, added it into a project file and then added the edited video files and pictures. This gave me a framework of everything else that I still needed to accomplish.

My next task was to fill in the gaps with animations that I created myself. This process was where I learned a lot more about After Effects and a lot more about myself. Learning a new software is both amazing and discouraging. When you figure out a tricky task, it feels like you can take on the world. However, when you are stuck on something for a while, it can become disheartening. I learned that I need to take my time when it comes to learning new software. There is no way I can learn it all in a few months, and that is okay. I focused on my strengths, and did the best I could with the skills I had.

After adding in all of my animations, I recorded a cleaner version of my narration, added in music and sound effects and then made some final editing adjustments. While it is easy to write that all in one quick sentence, it was far from quick in real time. Recording and editing audio has never been my strong suit so I had to find some outside help. One of my friends assisted me in the recording and helped me adjust the levels of audio. This was another way for

me to learn about myself. I accepted that it was fine to ask for help when I needed it. I knew that audio was not my strong suit, so it was better to ask someone else for help and end up with a better final product than do it myself and struggle to reach the quality I desired.

In the end, I am proud of my final product. The choice to do a video essay over a traditional essay allowed me to develop skills from my major that I otherwise would not have developed. I also believe that a video essay may reach a wider audience than a traditional essay, especially when considering that fangirls come together on the internet. I am glad I chose a very personal topic because I believe it made the argument more heartfelt. This goes back to what I learned in screenwriting class: “write what you know.” Writing and animating what I knew was way more fulfilling because I felt like I was making this video for a past version of myself. It was an ode to high school Erin. Overall, I hope that my thesis makes people think differently about how they treat teenage girls, especially fangirls. I hope that young girls see that their interests matter and that they are powerful.

Link to my video essay: <https://vimeo.com/333321303>

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